



How to prove need for services

One of the most important questions on a funding application form is the one that asks you to prove that your project is needed.

A good argument of need will use a combination of types of evidence. Some evidence will be gained from speaking to people who will use the project, and some will come from published research. Some will be quantitative, giving numbers and statistics, and some will be qualitative, about changes the project will make to people's lives.



All of the evidence should be detailed, specific and relevant to your argument, and you must be able to show where evidence is from; evidencing how you know a fact or referencing your sources. It is good to use real quotes, whether from people you have surveyed or from reports.

There are two elements to proving the need: 1. providing evidence that there is demand for the project (it fills a gap, makes a difference to beneficiaries, is the only service in the area etc.); and 2. proving the case for needing support or subsidy to make your project a reality.

Proving Demand for the project

Proving demand for your service means showing that there is an *unmet need* which you plan to fill. You can show this by:

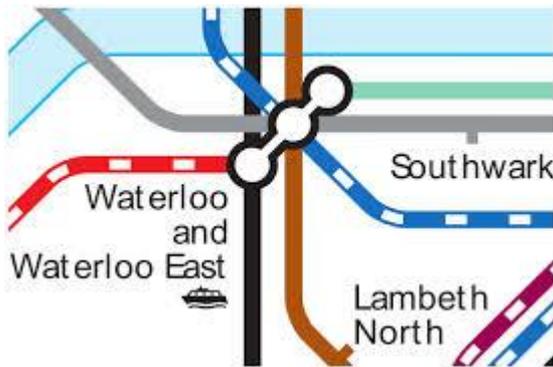
- ❖ **Using statistics and research to explore the wider context for the project** – use census data, population data, or any factual information to give a context of why your project is required. How does your project fit in with national and local policy and priorities? Is there are higher level of need in the area you are working in (e.g. higher than average unemployment levels)? Try comparing local statistics against regional or national statistics to show when need is higher than average in an area.
- ❖ **Ask your users and other stakeholders** – you can get anecdotal evidence from current or future users of your service. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, petitions, open meetings, observations, forums and consultations. Funders like to see groups engaging beneficiaries in the design of services: how can you get your beneficiaries to participate in the design of services.
- ❖ **Record unmet demand** – keeping waiting lists, information about gaps in provision, or referral waiting times can all be used to show that there is an unmet need which you plan to deal with. It is important that your work doesn't duplicate that of other people so always try to find out what else is happening in your field of work, and consider partnership working if something similar already exists.

Proving the need for subsidy

As well as showing why your work is needed, you also need to make a case for why you need funding to support you. For this you need to show how you plan to find funding to keep your project running, and that you have the correct systems in place to manage the project.

Think about what 'added value' you bring to your users and why you are the group that is best placed to deliver these services.

It can sometimes be a good idea to 'test out' your idea to see if it works before applying for longer term funding. This is called a 'Pilot study', and you can use this to evaluate what works and what changes you need to make to improve the service in the long term. Pilots can be really useful to try out new or perhaps more 'unconventional' or untried approaches, and evidence can be used from pilot studies to show that there is demand for a particular project or that it makes a difference to the lives of beneficiaries.



The wider context

❖ National Government

You should show that you are aware of national policy developments in your area of work. This might mean government strategies such as 'Localism,' green or white papers or reviews by government committees. You can also look for research conducted by universities. Look at Government department websites,

think tanks and research institutions to find evidence in this area – see resources below for some useful links.

❖ Local Government

You should find out about London government strategies and those of your local authority. What do your Council's Plan and/or community plans identify as priorities? What do your local authority commissioners see as the gaps in services in your area? What strategies are there for the development of services in your borough?

❖ Mapping Existing Services

Find out as much as you can about the projects other local organisations are running or planning to run which might be similar to yours. Does your project complement them by offering something slightly different or operating in another geographical area, or is it exactly the same? If it is the same it will be harder for you to argue to funders that there is a need and you are the best organisation to address it.

To find out what's already out there, ask your project's potential service-users:

- Where do they go now?
- Where do they think the gaps are?
- What exists already but could be improved or expanded?

Ask your own staff and local people you have contact with what they know of. Do internet searches and ask organisations like churches, community centres and housing associations.

If you can't find services locally like the one you are planning, see whether a neighbouring borough or a different part of the country has a project like the one you want to run. If this is working well you could mention it as part of your argument that your area needs this service too.

❖ **Statistics**

You can find a variety of statistics broken down by borough on the [Neighbourhood Statistics website](#) . There are more resources listed below that you could use and check whether other local organisations have gathered statistics you could use.

The picture on the ground

❖ **Describing your service users**

Funders sometimes ask for 'baseline information.' This is a description of the situation the people you will work with are in now, which can then be compared with after the project to see what change has been made.

Give details about beneficiaries characteristics (age, gender, postcode, ethnicity, disability), the conditions they live in (housing, family situation, employment), and barriers they are facing which you want to address.

❖ **Describing the change you want to make**

Your description of the local context and the beneficiaries will build up a picture of what the people need which is currently not being provided. Your project plans should relate directly to these needs. For example, if you identify that people don't have access to affordable childcare you should have an idea of how your project is going to make this happen.

This information will help you to articulate your 'outcomes' the difference you want to make to the lives of beneficiaries.

❖ **How to get the evidence**

To get the opinions of the people who will use the project and find out what issues they face you can conduct **focus groups, surveys and informal interviews**. With permission, you could use one individual as a **case study** to show the kinds of problems you want to address, so that as well as statistics you can paint a picture. As well as asking the service users you could also ask people who come into contact with them: health or education professionals, their families or other organisations.

In conclusion, try to use a spread of evidence to show the funder that there is an objective need for your services, demand for the services from beneficiaries and that you are the best organisation to deliver these services.

Useful Resources

National Statistics

- **UK National statistics publication hub** – National statistics divided into various themes e.g. crime and justice, children education & skills, Labour Market etc. www.statistics.gov.uk
- **Office for National statistics Census information**– helps to build a profile of the population, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/index.html>
- **Office for National Statistics** – information about the UK's economy and society <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html>

Local information

- **Neighbourhood statistics** – search for statistics for your postcode <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>

- **Southwark Council Plan** – provides an indication of the direction of the local authority and their priorities (the 2014 – 2018 plans are still being agreed) for more information see <http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=50005240>
- **Southwark statistics** – Southwark council have gathered together statistics relevant to Southwark on this webpage http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200088/statistics_and_census
- **DCLG Indices of deprivation** – the Index of Multiple Deprivations combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each small area in England. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-indices-of-deprivation-2010>

Specific areas of interest

- **Government Departments:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations>
- **London Health Observatory** (Now part of Public Health England): statistics on health <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>
- **Barnardo's:** research on children and families http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/policy_research_unit/research_and_publications.htm
- **Joseph Rowntree Foundation:** research on housing and social care www.jrf.org.uk
- **Kings Fund:** research on health www.kingsfund.org.uk/
- **Department for Work and Pensions:** www.dwp.gov.uk
- **Google Scholar** – works the same as 'Google' but just searches for research relating to your area of interest, <http://scholar.google.com>

Voluntary and Community Sector resources for research

- **ARVAC** (Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector) www.arvac.org.uk
- **Institute for Volunteering Research** www.ivr.org.uk
- **New Economics Foundation:** <http://www.neweconomics.org/>
- **IVAR** (Institute for Voluntary Action Research) <http://www.ivar.org.uk/>

Support

If you would like any support with proving need, writing funding applications or any other issues facing your organisation, please contact the Development Team at Community Southwark: development@communitysouthwark.org.uk or 020 7358 7020.